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ARTICLE

THE BENEFIT TO PHILOSOPHY OF THE STUDY OF ITS HISTORY[1]

Maria Rosa Antognazza

This paper advances the view that the history of philosophy is both a kind of history and a kind of philosophy. Through a discussion of some examples from epistemology, metaphysics, and the historiography of philosophy, it explores the benefit to philosophy of a deep and broad engagement with its history. It comes to the conclusion that doing history of philosophy is a way to think outside the box of the current philosophical orthodoxies. Somewhat paradoxically, far from imprisoning its students in outdated and crystallized views, the history of philosophy trains the mind to think differently and alternatively about the fundamental problems of philosophy. It keeps us alert to the fact that latest is not always best, and that a genuinely new perspective often means embracing and developing an old insight. The upshot is that the study of the history of philosophy has an innovative and subversive potential, and that philosophy has a great deal to gain from a long, broad, and deep conversation with its history.

KEYWORDS: history of philosophy; epistemology; metaphysics; historiography

INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have seen growing interest in the question of the relationship between history of philosophy and philosophy. After Q. Skinner's seminal paper of 1969 on 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas',[2] a number of landmark studies have appeared, including the collection of essays in the historiography of philosophy edited in

[1]A version of this paper was presented in November 2013 at King's College London as my Inaugural Lecture. I would like to thank Michael Ayers for allowing me to draw on our work-in-progress for the first part of this article. Thanks are also due to Michael Beaney and three anonymous referees for a number of helpful suggestions, and to Eleanor Knox for advice on the philosophy of physics. My deepest debt is to Howard Hotson for many insightful conversations on the issues discussed in this article.

[2]In this paper, Skinner famously advances the following rule of interpretation and historical reconstruction (28): 'no agent can eventually be said to have meant or done something

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1984 by Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner. As expounded in the introduction to that volume, the issue of the relationship between philosophy and history became more acute with the rise of analytic philosophy, with its traditional unhistorical or even anti-historical stance.[3] A pioneering conference on 'Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy', held by the British Society for the History of Philosophy in 2002 and resulting in a collective volume published in 2005, focused precisely on this uneasy relationship.[4] Meanwhile, analytic philosophy itself has undergone a 'historical turn', moving away from its ahistoricism towards an acknowledgement of the importance of the study of its own history.[5] It seems fair to say that, as a result of these debates and new historical awareness, the history of philosophy is now kosher in most analytically oriented departments of philosophy as a perfectly respectable sub-discipline of philosophy.

Very little agreement has been reached, however, on what the relationship between philosophy and history of philosophy should be (see Lærke, Smith, and Schliesser, *Philosophy and Its History*, 1). A collection of studies on *Philosophy and Its History* published in 2013 notes that two competing views continue to confront one another in the English-speaking world. On the one hand, there is an 'appropriationist' approach, according to which it is irrelevant to philosophy whether arguments mined from historical philosophical texts correspond to the genuine views of their authors. What matters is only whether these reconstructed arguments are philosophically interesting and relevant nowadays. On the other hand, a 'contextualist' approach insists that the main task of the history of philosophy is historical, consisting of a sound reconstruction of the reasons and thinking of authors in their historical contexts (Lærke, Smith and Schliesser, *Philosophy and Its History*, 1–6).[6]

which he could never have been brought to accept as a correct description of what he had meant or done'.

[3]Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner, *Philosophy in History*, 11–14. See especially the following essays included in the volume: Taylor, 'Philosophy and Its History'; MacIntyre, 'The Relationship of Philosophy to Its Past'; Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy'. Amongst key essays in the historiography of philosophy published in recent years, see Garber, 'Au-delà des arguments des philosophes'; Hunter, 'The History of Philosophy'; Glock, 'Analytic Philosophy and History'.

[4]Sorell and Rogers, *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*. See especially the following essays included in the volume: Cottingham, 'Why Should Analytic Philosophers Do History of Philosophy?'; Sorell, 'On Saying No'; Wilson, 'Is the History of Philosophy Good for Philosophy?'; Hatfield, 'The History of Philosophy as Philosophy'; Garber, 'What's Philosophical About the History of Philosophy?'.

[5]As noted by Beaney in his illuminating chapter on 'The Historiography of Analytic Philosophy', 55, work on the history of analytical philosophy has multiplied over the past decade. This development includes the establishment in 2011 of a *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, and the creation of a monograph series in the history of analytical philosophy (Palgrave Macmillan). On the 'historical turn' in analytical philosophy see Beaney, 'The Historiography of Analytic Philosophy', 52–6 and Reck, *The Historical Turn in Analytic Philosophy*.

[6]This is a first-pass approximation which is explored in a much more nuanced way in the course of the volume.

Roughly, the issue at stake is whether the history of philosophy is primarily a kind of history or a kind of philosophy. A classical version of this dichotomy, formulated at the dawn of analytic philosophy and representative of the approach adopted by early analytic philosophy towards past thinkers, is Russell's distinction in the preface to the first edition of his *Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900) between two 'different objects' that the history of philosophy 'proposes to itself': the first one is 'mainly historical' and concerns 'the influence of the times or of other philosophers'; the second one is 'mainly philosophical' and 'without regard to dates or influences' in its quest 'to discover what are the great types of possible philosophies'.[7] Russell was explicit in seeing the 'mainly historical' and the 'mainly philosophical' approaches as basically independent of one another, and in dismissing the former as irrelevant to his own philosophical enterprise of detecting the logical 'contradictions and inconsistencies' in the systems of 'the great philosophers of the past'.[8]

This paper, by contrast, will advance the view that the history of philosophy should be both a kind of history and a kind of philosophy, and that its engagement in genuinely historical inquiries is far from irrelevant to its capacity to contribute to philosophy as such.[9] As a kind of history, the history of philosophy must meet the standards of any other serious historical scholarship, including the use of the relevant linguistic and philological tools, and the study of the broader political, cultural, scientific, and religious contexts in which more strictly philosophical views developed. As a kind of philosophy, however, its ultimate aim should be a substantive engagement with those very philosophical views – first, in striving to understand them

[7]Russell, *Critical Exposition*, Preface to the First Edition, xi–xii. Another version of this dichotomy is captured by Rorty through the distinction between 'historical' and 'rational' reconstruction (Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy').

[8]Russell, *Critical Exposition*, Preface to the First Edition, xii:

> in such inquiries the philosopher is no longer explained psychologically: he is examined as the advocate of what he holds to be a body of philosophical truth. By what process of development he came to this opinion, though in itself an important and interesting question, is logically irrelevant to the inquiry how far the opinion itself is correct.

[9]The need of a synthesis between the 'historical' and 'philosophical' approaches for a proper understanding of the 'tensions' which drive philosophical thinking was already advocated by Ernst Cassirer in his review of Russell's book on Leibniz (see Cassirer, *Leibniz' System*, 532–41). Attention to the importance of Russell's views and Cassirer's reply for the historiography of philosophy is drawn by Beaney in 'The Historiography of Analytic Philosophy', 38–42. See also, Hunter, 'Russell Making History'. Beaney 'Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy: the Development of the Idea of Rational Reconstruction' proposes a resolution of the tension between 'rational' and 'historical' reconstructions through what he calls 'dialectical reconstruction'.

on their own terms,[10] and second, in probing and interrogating them as possible answers to central questions of enduring philosophical relevance.[11]

In my view, two opposite dangers, typical of two contrasting historiographical traditions, should therefore be avoided. The first is an antiquarianism which pursues ever more refined contextualization and exegesis while losing sight of why it matters – philosophically – to reconstruct the history of a text or the genealogy of an idea. The second is an anachronism which misses genuine insights of historical authors by reading its own present-day views into the past via the analysis of a few canonical texts taken out of their historical contexts. In other words, the point of the history of philosophy should be neither a historical reconstruction for its own sake, nor a glance at the past for some rudimentary version of our present-day ways of thinking. In neither case could philosophy gain much from studying its history in these ways. This is not to deny that a careful historical contextualization is necessary, or that there should be contributions which are unapologetically 'antiquarian' in their main aim of reconstructing the past. There can be, and in fact there is, a tacit division of labour in which some contributions to the history of philosophy are mainly historical and self-consciously avoid 'doing philosophy' while catering for historical exactitude (see Laerke, 'The Anthropological Analogy', esp. 8–11). On the other hand, there are contributions which are and should be focused on probing the merits of arguments found in past philosophical texts without much discussion of the historical contexts. The point is not that each single contribution in the history of philosophy must be both a piece of original historical research and a piece of novel philosophical argumentation. Rather, the claim is that the history of philosophy *as a whole* must be both history and philosophy in a proper and robust way. That is, the 'mainly historical' approach and the 'mainly philosophical' approach are, in my view, two faces of the same coin which together provide a distinctive contribution to philosophy.

[10]The golden rule that the views of past philosophers should be reconstructed 'on their own terms' is well established amongst historians of philosophy who stress the importance of the context in which views developed for a proper understanding of those very views. See, for instance, Hatfield, 'The History of Philosophy as Philosophy', 97. For a discussion of what it may mean to account for the views of past philosophers on their own terms, see, for instance, Lærke, 'The Anthropological Analogy', esp. 18–29.

[11]I agree here with Russell and others that there are indeed problems of enduring philosophical relevance, against the view that history would cure one of this very idea. An adequate defence of this thesis is beyond the scope of this paper but to give a couple of examples, I would count amongst such problems the inquiry into the nature of knowledge, or into the nature of what is ultimately real. This is different from missing the 'sense of historical contingency' inculcated by the history of philosophy (*Philosophy and Its History*, 14) or from taking as 'traditional or even "timeless" truths' what may well be 'the merest contingencies of our peculiar history and social structure' (Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding', 52). As I try to show below with my second example, studying the history of philosophy provides a very good antidote precisely against the temptation of collapsing currently prevailing views if not into a 'timeless truth' at least into the best explanation.

The key aim of this paper is to show, therefore, that philosophy can benefit greatly from a deep and broad engagement with its history. This aim is not pursued through the building of a theoretical framework but, more modestly, through the discussion of three case-studies from epistemology, metaphysics, and the historiography of philosophy itself. The first example will highlight the pitfalls of an appropriationistic approach which does not pay enough attention to history. With this example, I hope to uncover how an anachronistic approach can be highly detrimental to philosophy itself rather than being detrimental merely to a correct historical reconstruction. The second example will focus on how the history of philosophy trains the mind to remain open to alternative models of explanation, and resistant to easily settling for common sense beliefs or mainstream views.[12] Insofar as one of the goals of philosophy is to nurture critical independence and undogmatic thinking, this goal is nurtured in a significant and distinctive way also by the study of the history of philosophy. The third example returns briefly to Russell's *Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* and Leibnizian historiography to argue that an assessment of the coherence of a philosophical system and of its 'philosophical truth' (to use Russell's phrase) is not independent from a historical investigation of its development in its historical contexts.

I will conclude that doing history of philosophy is a way to think outside the box of the latest philosophical orthodoxies or commonly held beliefs. Somewhat paradoxically, far from imprisoning its students in outdated and crystallized views, the history of philosophy trains the mind to think differently and alternatively about the fundamental problems of philosophy. It keeps us alert to the fact that latest is not always best, and that a genuinely new perspective often means embracing and developing an old insight.

EPISTEMOLOGY – HOW TRADITIONAL IS THE TRADITIONAL ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE?

Perhaps the most salient example of the benefit to philosophy of a non-anachronistic engagement with its history comes from epistemology.[13]

We are frequently told that, on the 'traditional' or 'standard' understanding of knowledge, 'knowledge that *p* is, at least approximately, justified true belief' (Steup, 'Epistemology', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (*Winter 2012 Edition*)). Under the entry 'Epistemology', published in 2005 in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, we read:

> one virtually universal presupposition is that knowledge is true belief, but not mere true belief … Thus, a central question in epistemology is: what must be

[12]A version of this point can be found in Della Rocca, 'The Taming of Philosophy'.

[13]Views briefly presented here are explored and defended in much greater detail in a paper which I am jointly writing with Michael Ayers on the so-called traditional analysis of knowledge.

> added to true beliefs to convert them into knowledge? … The historically dominant tradition in epistemology answers that question by claiming that it is the quality of the reasons for our beliefs that converts true beliefs into knowledge.[14]

Similar statements in reference works and introductions to epistemology could be multiplied. They are normally taken for granted in discussions on epistemology, irrespective of whether these discussions are sympathetic or unsympathetic towards the 'traditional' or 'standard' view of knowledge. Edmund Gettier's paper of 1963,[15] the story continues, therefore blew a big hole in this long tradition stretching back to Plato via Kant and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by exposing the fact that justified true belief is not sufficient for knowledge. In so doing, it 'single-handedly changed the course of epistemology'.[16]

Post-Gettier epistemology has been characterized by an array of attempts to repair the hole by providing more and more sophisticated analyses which (typically) address the issue of how the third condition for knowledge (to be added to truth and belief) should be reconceived.[17] An adequate repair, however, has proven elusive. A number of Post-Gettier authors have denounced the failure of the 'traditional' analysis and proposed alternative accounts of knowledge,[18] notably Timothy Williamson who writes in his

[14]Klein, 'Epistemology', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Paul K. Moser in his 'Introduction' to *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, 4, maintains that

> an influential traditional view, inspired by Plato and Kant among others, is that propositional knowledge has three individually necessary and jointly sufficient components: justification, truth, and belief. On this view, propositional knowledge is, by definition, justified true belief. This tripartite definition has come to be called 'the standard analysis'.

The 'General Introduction' to a comprehensive anthology of texts on *Human Knowledge* (eds. Paul K. Moser and Arnold van der Nat, 3rd ed. 2003, 1) states that 'the traditional view of human propositional knowledge, originating in Plato's *Meno* and *Theaetetus*, acknowledges three essential, or required, components of such knowledge. These components are captured by the view that knowledge is, inherently, justified true belief'. See also Shope, 'Conditions and Analyses of Knowing', 29.

[15]Gettier, 'Is justified true belief knowledge?'

[16]Pollock, *Contemporaries Theories of Knowledge*, 180. It should be noted that Russell had already found a counterexample in 1912, well before Gettier's paper (*Problems of Philosophy*, ch.13; see also *Human Knowledge*, 170–1). I am grateful to Michael Beaney for these references.

[17]See Shope, *The Analysis of Knowing* and Shope, 'Conditions and Analyses of Knowing' for a sophisticated discussion of almost countless attempts.

[18]See, for instance, Quine, 'Epistemology Naturalized'; Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature*; Hyman 'How Knowledge Works'; Kornblith, *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature*. In the early twentieth century, the so-called 'Oxford realists' (notably J. Cook Wilson and H. A. Prichard) never embraced a conception of knowledge as justified true belief. Instead, they saw knowledge and belief as different in kind, with knowledge prior. See Marion, 'Oxford Realism' and Travis – Kalderon, 'Oxford Realism'.

Knowledge and Its Limits (30): 'Since Gettier refuted the traditional analysis of *knows* as *has a justified true belief* in 1963, a succession of increasingly complex analyses have been overturned by increasingly complex counterexamples'; 'the upshot of that debate is that no currently available analysis of knowledge in terms of belief is adequate' (Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 4).

But how traditional is this traditional analysis of knowledge? The often repeated view that the traditional analysis of knowledge has its ancestor in Plato has been recently challenged in a study on ancient epistemology. According to this study, not only Plato but ancient philosophers more generally did not think of knowledge as a belief that meets certain criteria.[19] Recent scholarship has in fact reaffirmed the traditional interpretation of Plato's epistemology as involving a sharp distinction between knowledge and belief.[20] In Books V–VII of *Republic*, Plato presents one of his fullest accounts of this distinction. The discussion culminates in three similes (the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Cave) that constitute a defining moment in a strand of thought running through the history of Western philosophy. This strand of thought is characterized by key distinctions between the intelligible and the sensible, reality and appearance, knowledge and belief. In short, one of the main thrusts of Platonism (at least as historically interpreted) is the intuition that knowledge and belief are different in kind, distinguished by two different powers or faculties.[21] The power of knowing is the power to apprehend or 'see' the Forms, or what really *is*; the power of opining is the power to judge (rightly or wrongly) of appearances. Like the freed prisoner of the Cave, we can only achieve knowledge by turning away from *doxa* and appearances.

To be sure, important points of interpretation of Plato's complex epistemology remain controversial. Even if one were to grant for argument's sake that recent interpreters have correctly detected in *Theaetetus*, or in a passage of *Meno*, a conception of knowledge as justified true belief which Plato might have entertained, that does not take away the dominant reception in Western thought of a distinctive reading of *Republic*. The *Republic*'s standpoint characterizes the mainstream way in which Plato's thought trickled down through the centuries as 'Platonism'. If only for that reason, the core of the long and central Platonist tradition in Western philosophy – with its sharp distinction of kind between knowledge and belief – falls outside the so-called 'traditional' analysis of knowledge.

[19]Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology*, 2–3; see also Gerson, 'Platonic Knowledge and the Standard Analysis'. For a different view see Fine, 'Knowledge and Belief in Plato's *Republic* 5–7'; Fine, 'Knowledge and True Belief in the *Meno*'; Fine, *The Possibility of Inquiry*.
[20]See, for instance, Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism*.
[21]'Knowledge' and 'opinion' are in fact largely treated in *Republic* 477a–478d as powers or faculties.

As in Plato, so in Plotinus and Neoplatonism, the sensible is ultimately intelligible only through the Forms, archetypes, or paradigms that the Intellect contemplates. Knowledge is ontologically prior to belief. Aristotle broke away from a transcendental conception of the Forms, giving sensible bodies the status of fundamental *ousiai* or 'things that are' and according an essential, basic role to the senses and experience in the acquisition of knowledge. Nevertheless he retained a form of the knowledge-belief distinction of kind. The move to an explanatory definition seems to be an intuitive leap of understanding correspondent to the Platonic apprehension of a Form, a movement involving a cognitive state, understanding, different in kind from belief.[22] Stoicism, constituting another influential tradition, maintained a similar sharp distinction of belief or opinion from knowledge, and a broadly similar conception of the movement from one to the other.[23] Scholastic Aristotelianism took root in the context of a common conception of a harmony or essential agreement between Plato and Aristotle. Accordingly, a conception of knowledge as, ultimately, a primitive grasping or seeing intelligible truth was a central feature of the scholastics' theory of knowledge.

If we turn now to early-modern theory of knowledge, generally taken to be dominated by the so-called 'standard analysis', an account of knowledge as justified true belief is hard to find, and it is indeed peculiarly at odds with what main canonical seventeenth-century philosophers say about knowledge – including Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, and Leibniz. Instead we continue to find a firm distinction of kind between knowledge and belief. The distinction is maintained not only by those rationalists who more or less self-consciously adopted a broadly Platonic framework, but no less categorically by the leading empiricist, John Locke.

In brief, in early modern texts, instead of finding the idea of beliefs as the starting point of knowledge, we find the view that knowledge can start only by turning away from beliefs and opinions (Descartes). As in the Platonic allegory of the Cave, the first step towards knowledge is to free ourselves from beliefs and opinions and 'look, gaze at', *intueri* – the Latin term adopted by Descartes to indicate an immediate mental apprehension.[24] Evidence is taken by Descartes in its primary (and nowadays often overlooked) sense: that is, as derived from *videre* ('to see'). Evidence is not primarily a set of reasons for believing something but a primitive 'seeing', that is, an immediate intellectual apprehending, grasping, or perceiving that something is the case. In other words, instead of finding knowledge as a species of belief, we find that knowledge is a state of mind irreducibly different from belief since it is *seeing* (mentally perceiving) what in the state of belief we *cannot see*, that is, the connection between two or more ideas; sensitive

[22] *Posterior Analytics* B19 (99b15–100b17).
[23] See Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, I 236–66; II 238–63.
[24] Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, 'Rule Three' (AT X, 366/CSM I, 13). See also CSM I, 13, footnote 1.

knowledge is in turn an irreducible and primitive *perception* 'about *the particular existence of finite Beings* without us' (Locke, *Essay*, IV.ii.14).

To summarize, if one returns to examining main figures and traditions in the history of philosophy, the 'standard' analysis begins to look surprisingly non-standard. The 'traditional' view, it appears, is not a tradition stretching back to the infancy of philosophy, the epistemic naivety of which was finally exposed in 1963 by Gettier's short paper. Instead, it begins to look like a twentieth-century view, prominent especially in the Anglo-American world, which after the middle of the century, has repeatedly tried and, according to many, failed to correct itself.[25]

A number of epistemologists have now come to the conclusion that the analysis of knowledge as belief plus the addition of some conditions does not work. Perhaps this is why, historically, the traditional accounts of knowledge central to Western philosophy *did not* take knowledge to be a kind of belief which meets certain criteria. The project of finding what should be added to belief in order to turn it into knowledge would have been regarded by much pre-twentieth century epistemology as absurd.

Instead, a persistent and genuinely traditional strand of thought can be documented according to which knowledge derives directly from its object which is present in a primitive and irreducible way to the mind of the knower (I am taking here 'object' in the broadest sense, as including, for instance, the agreement between two ideas as the 'object' of cognition). That is, knowledge is a primitive perception or an irreducible mental 'seeing' what is the case; knowledge is a primitive presence of a fact to the mind (or to the senses) in which there is no 'gap' between knower and known. Belief, on the contrary, is a mental state or a cognitive mode in which precisely the perception or presence which characterizes knowledge is lacking, and assent to the object of cognition is given (rightly or wrongly) on grounds external to the object itself. We should not suppose that the terms 'belief', 'faith', and 'opinion' here carry overtones of questionable speculation determined by something other than convincing reasoning. On the contrary, the 'assurance' with which 'belief', 'faith' or 'opinion' may be embraced includes entirely reasonable assurance on thoroughly justified grounds. The distinction of assured true 'belief' from 'knowledge' lies in the *kind* or source of assurance, not its degree. The grounds for believing may be very strong, and belief can be true and perfectly justified – and still, on the traditional account, such belief would not be knowledge but a different mental state or cognitive mode which cannot be turned into knowledge

[25]Gettier himself tentatively claims that the 'traditional' analysis of knowledge starts with Plato (Gettier, 'Is justified true belief knowledge?': 'Plato seems to be suggesting such definition at *Theaetetus* 201, and perhaps accepting one at *Meno* 98'). Interestingly, however, the two definitions of knowledge explicitly quoted as advancing the view that knowledge is justified true belief (Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* and Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*) do not pre-date Gettier's article more than a few years.

without stopping to be (strictly speaking) belief. Most traditional epistemology would have certainly agreed that justified true belief is not sufficient for knowledge – not because something else should be added to true justified beliefs, but because knowledge is something altogether different from belief.

Belief and knowledge, on the other hand, can both be conceived as species of the genus 'thinking with assent'.[26] As Aquinas presents this account:

> Now the intellect assents [assentit] to something in two ways. One way, because it is moved to assent by the object itself [ab ipso objecto], which is known either through itself [per seipsum cognitum] (as in the case of first principles, of which there is understanding [intellectus]), or through something else already known [per aliud cognitum] (as in the case of conclusions, of which there is knowledge [scientia]). In another way, the intellect assents to something, not because it is sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through a certain voluntary choice turning toward one side rather than the other. And if this is done with doubt or fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion [opinio]; if, on the other hand, this is done with certainty [cum certitudine] and without such fear, there will be faith [fides]. Now those things are said to be seen [videri dicuntur] which, by themselves, move our intellect or the senses to knowledge of them [ad sui cognitionem]. Wherefore it is evident [manifestum est] that neither faith nor opinion can be of things seen [nec fides nec opinio potest esse de visis] either by the senses or by the intellect. (*Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae, q. 1, art. 4)

> … the reason why the same thing cannot simultaneously and in the same respect be known and believed, is that what is known is seen whereas what is believed is not seen [ea ratione non potest simul idem et secundum idem esse scitum et creditum, quia scitum est visum et creditum est non visum]. (*Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae, q. 1, art. 5 ad 4)

Despite the key differences in the epistemologies of philosophers as diverse as Aquinas, Descartes, and Locke, in all three we find the idea that knowing is, or involves, 'seeing' or 'perceiving', and that what is known brings with it the thought that the object of knowledge is immediately and irreducibly 'present to the mind' (or to the senses) of the knower, distinguishing

[26]Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 2, art. 1:

> If 'to think' is taken broadly … then 'to think with assent' does not express completely what it is 'to believe' since, in this way, also the one considering the things he knows or understands thinks with assent [hoc quod dicitur cum assensione cogitare non dicit totam rationem eius quod est credere, nam per hunc modum etiam qui considerat ea quae scit vel intelligit cum assensione cogitat].

All translations of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* are my own, based on the *Textum Leoninum* (Rome 1886–1887) now available online in *Corpus Thomisticum.* When Aquinas uses key terms such as *intellectus*, *ratio*, *visio*, *cognitio*, *scientia*, *notitia*, and *credere* I give also the original Latin due to the notorious ambiguity of the English translation of some of these terms.

knowledge as the most fundamental cognitive mode. Perceiving some truth or fact is not a matter of having justification for a belief in the form of other beliefs. It is being in a position not to need a justification or reasons. Knowledge is not something that is built up from beliefs; it is beliefs that are justified by knowledge: belief in what we cannot see is justified by what we can see.

It is not the presence or absence of firm assent which distinguishes per se knowledge from belief, but the presence or absence of the 'clear sight [manifesta visio]' of the object of cognition. Knowledge and belief are both cases of cognition, and both are concerned with what is true or false, but with the crucial difference that in knowledge the assent is moved by the object itself which is present to the mind; in belief the assent is given for reasons external to the object.[27]

At least in some important versions of this account of knowledge as a perception or 'seeing' (for instance, in Locke), knowledge and belief do not have different objects: what is truly believed by someone can be known by someone else, and something believed by a person can later be known by that same person. But the crucial point is that the passage from belief to knowledge would be a passage from one cognitive mode, mental act, or state to another qualitatively different cognitive mode, mental act, or state, rather than a passage to a special case of the more generic state of belief.[28]

Something like this earlier, genuinely traditional conception of knowledge and its relation to belief, purged of some unacceptable elements, constitutes a fruitful alternative to the 'degenerating research programme' (Williamson,

[27] *Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae, q. 2, art. 1:

> in the act of believing there is firm acceptance of one side; in this respect the one who believes is similar to the one who knows and the one who understands [actus iste qui est credere habet firmam adhaesionem ad unam partem, in quo convenit credens cum sciente et intelligente], and yet his cognition is not perfect by means of clear sight [eius cognitio non est perfecta per manifestam visionem], in which respect he is similar to the one who doubts, suspects, and opines. And this is proper of the believer as one who thinks with assent [ut cum assensu cogitet], and in this the act of believing is distinguished from all the acts of the intellect which are about the true and the false.

See also *Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae, q. 1, art. 5.

[28] As Aquinas explains it (*Summa Theologiae* IIa IIae, q. 1, art. 5):

> all knowledge [scientia] is acquired through some self-evident, and therefore 'seen', principles [principia per se nota, et per consequens visa]. And for that reason it is necessary that whatsoever is known is, in some way, seen [quaecumque sunt scita aliquo modo esse visa]. Now, as stated above, it is not possible that the same thing should be believed and seen by the same person. Hence it is indeed impossible that the same things be known and believed [scitum et creditum] by the same person. Nevertheless it may happen that what is seen or known [visum vel scitum] by one, is believed by another.

Knowledge and Its Limits, 31) of identifying the criteria that belief must satisfy in order to be knowledge. Far from displaying epistemic naivety, the history of philosophy displays a genuine insight which may help setting back on the right track twenty-first century epistemology.

METAPHYSICS – THINKING ABOUT 'MATTER'

A second example of the benefit to philosophy of the study of its history comes from metaphysics. 'Matter' is one of those ubiquitous terms which we encounter in day-to-day life as well as in scientific discourse. But what is 'matter'? Many people would probably reply that it is, roughly, the 'stuff' which we experience as extended and as offering some degree of resistance, and of which physical objects are made up. This pre-theoretical, common sense view of matter tallies with the 'classical picture of the physical world' in which matter is conceived as 'an impenetrable something, which fills completely certain regions of space and which persists through time even when it changes its location'.[29] This common sense picture was indeed a plausible approximation in the fairly immediately intelligible world of mechanistic physics. The strange world of modern physics, however, makes it much more inaccurate to think of physical objects or bodies as ultimately made up of the extended 'stuff' that we experience.[30] And of course talking of 'stuff' is suspiciously close to just using another word for 'matter' rather than attempting a genuine explanation. In fact one could argue that modern physics has no use for the concept of matter in its technical work. Scientists talk of matter to give some intelligible referent to lay people for their mathematical constructs, but as 'a means to theoretical insight, the concept of matter is entirely the property of the philosopher and the 'meta-scientist'.[31] Interestingly, the *NewScientist* has a philosopher

[29]In his monumental study on *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics* (54), Čapek argues that this is the concept of matter commonly held until the beginning of the twentieth century. The first part of his book is devoted to expounding the 'classical picture of the physical world' up until the advent of atomic physics, relativity theory, and quantum theory.

[30]By the mid-twentieth century it was already clear that the move away of physics from entities similar to the objects of our sense experience towards abstract mathematical constructs called for a radically different view of nature. Cf. Čapek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics*, esp. part II, chapters XVIII–XIX. A very interesting way to address the discrepancy between scientific theory and our pre-theoretical or experiential knowledge of the world has been proposed by Ayers, 'Reflections on the Notion of Substance', 110–28. According to this proposal, insights embodied in traditional realist doctrines of substance point to the source of primitive structural features of our thinking and language that are largely neglected or down-played in current theory, and to which considerations drawn from the philosophy of physics are simply irrelevant.

[31]This is the conclusion reached already in 1963 by Ernan McMullin at the end of his introduction to the massive volume on *The Concept of Matter* collecting contributions on Ancient, Medieval, and Modern conceptions of matter in philosophy and science. See 38–41 (here 41).

(rather than a physicist) answering the question 'Is matter real?' in its special issue on 'What is reality?'[32]

We need to turn, therefore, to philosophy in order to probe our pre-theoretical understanding of matter, and determine the role that the concept of matter may play in an inquiry into what is ultimately real. If one turns specifically to the history of philosophy, one finds ways of explaining what matter is which challenge assumptions, expose problems of prima facie satisfactory accounts, and force us to consider unfamiliar and yet powerful possible alternatives. In a nutshell, one of the things the history of philosophy does is keeping the mind open to alternative perspectives as well as resistant to settling easily for commonly held views or common sense beliefs.

One of the most fertile metaphysical models ever put forward as an account of the natural bodies of experience is Aristotelian hylomorphism. Aristotelian hylomorphism conceives 'substances' – that is, the fundamental beings in the universe which are metaphysically primary – as constituted by two intrinsic metaphysical principles, matter and form. In this broadly Aristotelian framework, matter (or more precisely, primary matter, that is matter considered according to what it is in itself, matter according to its fundamental ontological status) is the ultimate subject of change implied by the Aristotelian analysis of change as involving a substratum in which now a certain form, then another form inheres. The intuitive picture is that of clay which receives a form, being shaped, say, into a vase, and then into a statue and so on. The form is what realizes, or makes actual what is merely potential – that is, actualizes the potential of the lump of clay to become a statue.

The very notion of a substratum might suggest that primary matter has a positive ontological status, namely, that it is some kind of indeterminate 'stuff' in which forms inhere. This is the way in which late Scholastics interpreted matter or the Aristotelian substratum. It is not at all clear, however, that this is what Aristotle intended. For one thing, this account seems to lead to the conclusion that if 'matter' is some kind of permanent being which remains through change, 'matter' itself is what ultimately qualifies as 'substance', that is, as what is metaphysically primary. Forms are reduced to properties which 'matter', the real substance, has at one time and lacks at another. To be sure, this is one way one could go. However, despite its immediate intuitive appeal, this road is fraught with difficulties and leads to places where the late Scholastics did not want to go. Crucially, it misses the key point of the Aristotelian explanatory model according to which 'matter' is not some kind of being which can exist on its own, or some particular thing in its own right. 'Matter' is a metaphysical principle which is postulated to explain, together with form, those very particular, changing things which exist in their own right. So the clay analogy is,

[32]Westerhoff, 'Is Matter Real?', 37–46. Westerhoff concludes that 'the moral to draw' from a reductionist scenario driven by recent theories in subatomic physics is that 'either what is fundamental is not material, or that nothing at all is fundamental' (46).

precisely, an analogy and not an example of what matter is. As a really existing thing, clay is already a composite of matter and form. 'Matter' is not a 'thing' but a principle intended to account for the fact that in some important sense there is something in common between the lump of clay and the statue, and the statue is not a completely new being with no ontological relation to the lump of clay.

Unlike the later Scholastics, Aquinas stressed therefore that matter should be conceived as pure potentiality which receives all its actuality from the form. As in itself pure potentiality, matter cannot exist without one form or another inhering in it (see, for instance, Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, Lib. 2, cap. 43, n. 5; Lib. 4, cap. 63, n. 5). Duns Scotus, however, was quick to point out that matter conceived as pure potentiality amounts to nothing (*nihil*): 'If you want to have proper pure potency, without any act, you will have *nothing*: as in privation without a subject' (Scotus, *Quaestiones subtilissimae* (Wadding IV, 681)). Scotus settled, therefore, on a concept of matter as a positive entity really distinct (that is, separable) from the form. To be sure, according to this account, matter would have only minimal actuality (*infimus actus*) and would be in a relation of potentiality towards all other acts. Nonetheless, it would still be something as opposed to nothing, and would still have an actuality of its own (Scotus, *Quaestiones subtilissimae* (Wadding IV, 681)).

The history of hylomorphism over the medieval and the early modern periods is immensely complex and nuanced, and cannot be followed here. However, for my purposes, it is enough to point to one strikingly innovative way in which the competing views just mentioned played out in the thought of Leibniz. Leibniz, as most other thinkers seeking an explanation of natural bodies, starts his inquiry from the corporeal world of physical objects – that is, the solid, extended stuff of which we have experience. His early reflections on extension and the physical world lead him however to his contention that the primary qualities of bodies identified by mechanistic physics – magnitude, figure, and motion – are insufficient to account for our experience of the phenomena of the corporeal world. In particular, the fact that matter, conceived by Descartes as extension, is infinitely divisible – and even, according to Leibniz, actually infinitely divided – indicates that it does not have in itself the intrinsic principle of unity needed to qualify as a 'substance'. The very analysis of corporeal phenomena calls for the postulation of an incorporeal principle which Leibniz, following traditional Aristotelian terminology, initially calls 'substantial form'. As we have seen, traditional views conceived form as that which realizes or makes actual what is merely potential. Leibniz's substantial form is the intrinsic principle of unity and activity needed by a being to qualify as a substance. It is the 'substantial form' which in his view gives whatever reality they have to bodies.

In his mature years Leibniz continues to maintain a version of the traditional form-matter distinction. In accounting for the ontological status of primary matter he is certainly closer to Aquinas's view that matter is pure

potentiality and, as such, cannot exist without one form or another inhering in it, than to the later Scholastics, who see matter as a positive ontological principle with an actuality of its own. Yet he is much more radical than Aquinas. He sees that, as Scotus and Ockham had pointed out, conceiving primary matter as pure potentiality leads to the identification of primary matter with non-being. But he does not recoil from such a conclusion and either deny that primary matter is pure potentiality (as Scotus and Ockham had done) or deny that pure potentiality is mere non-being (as Aquinas had done; see Aquinas, *Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum*, Lib. 1, Lectio 15, n. 2). Instead, in my view, he embraces the conclusion that primary matter, being pure potentiality, is non-being. Primary Matter is just a noun, a way to describe the necessary limitation of the active power or force which constitutes created simple substances or monads. It is *not* a positive constituent which must be added to the form in order to have a substance. Primary matter is merely a way to express the negation of some further perfection. In brief, Leibniz moves away from the broadly Aristotelian framework of primary substances as composites of two ontological constituents, form and matter, of which matter is the ultimate subject of inherence, towards a more frankly Neoplatonic (or more precisely Plotinian) framework in which matter is identified with non-being.[33]

Our contemporary sensibility recoils from the claim that 'The matter of things is nothing, that is, limitation [Materia rerum est nihilum: id est limitatio].'[34] But one has to ask what that claim really means. Does it 'do away' with the sensible world, the world that we experience? My answer is 'no', Leibniz's claim that 'the matter of things is nothing' does not 'do away' with the sensible world. Form and matter, even in Leibniz's idiosyncratic version, are primitive explanatory principles that are supposed to account (or give reason) for the empirically observable range of effects in the sensible world of which we have experience. His aim is to explain the world of objects and 'stuff', not to deny it. This very world of 'stuff' and sensible objects is what Leibniz is interested in. This is the starting point of Leibniz's inquiry. His point of arrival is not its denial, but its explanation. In eliminating primary matter as a 'thing', a 'res', Leibniz is not eliminating the *facts* of our experience of the world as encounters with extension, impenetrability, solidity, resistance (that is, the facts of the corporeal world). Rather, he is reducing these facts to facts about simple substances (or monads) with

[33]I argue for this reading of Leibniz's conception of primary matter in more detail in Antognazza, 'Primary Matter'.

[34]'Extraits de Twisse', c. 1695 (in Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, 355–6):

> Being posited or actuality, and restriction or the privative are in beings like metaphysical form and metaphysical matter [Positio vel actus, et restrictio vel privativo se habent in entibus ut forma metaphysica et materia metaphysica]. And thus the matter of things is nothing [est nihilum], i.e. limitation; [their] form is perfection.

limited degrees of perfection, limited degrees of perception, limited degrees of active powers.[35] He is not saying that these empirically observable facts are illusions, but that they are *phenomena bene fundata*, well-founded phenomena, expressing something which is ultimately real.[36] In sum, this is Leibniz's Ockham razor, ruthlessly shaving away any reducible *entia* in favour of minimal ontological commitments.

My aim here is not to argue that Leibniz was right. Rather, I wish simply to note that Leibniz's proposal constitutes one of a handful of genuinely alternative ways of thinking about matter arriving at the conclusion that what is ultimately real are active powers or forces as opposed to extended stuff. This metaphysical model challenges more immediately intuitive accounts. If nothing else, it exposes the problems that such accounts will have to face if they wish to maintain their claim of being the best on the market. Moreover, while strikingly innovative, Leibniz's proposal is also deeply rooted in an ancient, multi-layered conversation about possible explanations of our experience of the world. Leibniz's metaphysics therefore suggests that some of the most innovative philosophical thinking comes from thorough engagement with the millennia-long history of what others have thought before us, considering which problems they have tried to solve, and which problems their solutions have in turn opened. The history of philosophy does not so much present us with settled conclusions as with alternative explanations. It alerts us to the possibility of looking at things from a completely different angle – an angle that might be orthogonal to our present-day perspective and which is capable of turning the whole picture upside-down, showing that there is a competing and yet coherent way to see what is in front of us. Students of the history of philosophy are therefore continuously challenged to make up their own minds and never to take for granted the latest mainstream consensus. The history of philosophy is, in short, an excellent antidote to the constant temptation of intellectual dogmatism.

HISTORIOGRAPHY – PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS; SCIENCE AND RELIGION

A third and final example of the benefit to philosophy of the study of its history comes from the historiography of philosophy, and concerns the relationship between philosophy and theological commitments, or, more

[35]This is analogous to what Ockham does with quantity forms. See Adams, *Ockham*, vol. 2, 694.

[36]See Leibniz to De Volder, around January 1705 (in Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, vol. II, 275; translated by Lodge in *The Leibniz-De Volder Correspondence*, 319):

> I do not really do away with body, but reduce it to what it is. For I show that a corporeal mass that is believed to have something besides simple substances is not a substance but a phenomenon resulting from simple substances, which alone have unity and absolute reality.

broadly, the relationship between science and religion. In the history of early modern science, pioneering work conducted decades ago established that religion, in its various orthodox and heterodox versions, played a key role in the advancement and development of modern science and that, therefore, some popular conceptions of science as emerging from the rejection of religion are simply mistaken.[37] Due to persistent tendencies to anachronism in approaching past thinkers, philosophy has been slower in revising its appreciation of the role of theological commitments in the development of philosophical systems.

An illuminating case is provided, once again, by Leibniz. From the re-discovery of Leibniz at the beginning of the twentieth century until at least the early 1990s, the dominant historiography dismissed any theological interest in Leibniz which could not be straightforwardly reduced to metaphysics as mere lip-service aimed at his career advancement. The historiography promoted by Russell's monograph played an important role in the establishment of this attitude. It is a small step from the interpretative principle that an author's interests and commitments are irrelevant for the adjudication of the logical soundness of his doctrine, to Russell's famous dichotomy between Leibniz's good and bad philosophy (Russell, *Critical Exposition*, Preface to the First Edition, vi) – the good one corresponding to the logic prized by Russell; the bad one to everything which did not easily fit in that pigeon-hole. Ironically, Russell's own interests and commitments determined his verdict on Leibniz's monadology as a 'fantastic fairy tale, coherent perhaps, but wholly arbitrary' (Russell, *Critical Exposition*, Preface to the First Edition, xiii).

Perhaps even more revealing of the historiographical bias against the importance of Leibniz's theological concerns is the fact that the critical edition of Leibniz's works and correspondence (began in the early twentieth century) did not devote any of its eight series to theology (Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*). Yet, if one turns to the main catalogue of Leibniz's manuscripts, published in 1895, the first, extensive group of manuscripts is classified as 'Theologie' (Bodemann, *Die Leibniz-Handschriften*, I: 'Theologie', 1–25).

In the mid-twentieth century, Gaston Grua's monographs and collection of Leibniz's unpublished writings drew attention to the centrality of theodicean preoccupations to Leibniz's thought and to the importance of Leibniz's natural theology for the understanding of his theodicy (Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et Théodicée selon Leibniz*; Grua, *La Justice humaine selon Leibniz*). Yet, it was not until the mid-1990s that a milestone monograph by R. M. Adams marked the return in mainstream Anglo-American

[37]Cf. the so-called 'Merton thesis', advanced in 1938 by sociologist of science Robert K. Merton in *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England.* This thesis was debated in a huge body of journal articles in the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in Charles Webster's mammoth monograph of 1976, *The Great Instauration*.

historiography of a sustained appreciation for Leibniz's more strictly theological concerns (Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*). From the mid-1990s onward, studies paying close attention to theological aspects of Leibniz's thought and their relationship to his philosophical system have multiplied. The identification, collection, and analysis of a substantial corpus of virtually unstudied philosophical-theological writings uncovered a thinker surprisingly receptive to traditional Christian theology and genuinely committed to the defence of a class of truths which surpasses the full grasp of human reason. In my own work in this area, contrary to Russell's caricature, I have argued that Leibniz's writings on the Trinity and the Incarnation show Leibniz's life-long commitment to the defence of the central mysteries of the Christian revelation. This commitment, far from being mere lip-service of a consummate courtier, coheres with his epistemological and metaphysical views and constitutes a key aspect of his broader philosophical, scientific, and practical agenda (see Antognazza, *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation*). Although at odds with the conventional picture of Leibniz as a hard rationalist, which dominated the field some thirty years ago, the acknowledgment of his theological views is now fundamental to the ongoing reassessment of many aspects of his work.

Moreover, in an intellectual biography of Leibniz published in 2009, I traced the development of Leibniz's thought trying to offer a coherent portrait of a unique thinker by identifying the master project that inspired and coordinated his huge range of apparently miscellaneous endeavours. Throughout his long intellectual life, I argue, Leibniz tenaciously pursued a single central objective: the systematic reform and development of all the sciences, to be undertaken as a collaborative enterprise in academies of science supported by an enlightened ruler. These theoretical pursuits were in turn ultimately grounded in a practical goal: the improvement of the human condition through scientific advances and thereby the celebration of the glory of God in His creation. Far from being an obstacle to science, Leibniz's religious outlook provided a fundamental inspiration for his overarching intellectual and scientific project (see Antognazza, *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography*).

Does understanding Leibniz's aims and deep commitments matter, including his broadly theological rather than strictly philosophical commitments? I think it matters a great deal and this is for many reasons, including because it is intrinsically valuable to try to establish what is the case. There is no reason why in philosophy we should have licence to approach this quest in a cavalier way when it comes to historical truths.[38] However, more specifically, I think that understanding such broadly theological commitments matters to *philosophy*. For instance, as Robert Sleight and R. M. Adams have

[38]It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a proper investigation of the notion of historical truth. On this issue see for instance Lærke, 'The Anthropological Analogy' and Smith, 'The History of Philosophy as Past and as Process'.

argued, Leibniz's commitment to a doctrine of creation in terms of God and his concepts is a major source of his commitment to the conceptual containment theory of truth. More generally, his determinism (encompassing theses of modal metaphysics such as his denial of counterfactual individual identities) was shaped into its particular configuration largely by his theology (see Adams, *Leibniz*, 4, 67–8; Sleigh, 'Truth and Sufficient Reason', 236).

But even if we grant that non-strictly philosophical commitments are often essential for a full understanding of historical philosophical views, one could still ask whether it really matters to understand what a past thinker really thought. After all, what ultimately matters in philosophy is the quality and cogency of the arguments, not whether they were put forward in this or that form by this or that person. This view, however, overlooks the fact that the quality and cogency of the *arguments* is much more likely to be uncovered if one pays close attention to the way in which extraordinarily penetrating minds really presented these arguments, as well as to the contexts which implicitly fill the premises of what are often enthymematic arguments. Superior minds are few and far between, and there is a great deal to be gained from listening to what they actually thought.[39] By the same token, there is a great deal that philosophy can gain in terms of refining and advancing its arguments from really listening to its history.

CONCLUSION

I come to my conclusions. The first example, from epistemology, shows (amongst other things) that the genuine insights of historical authors can be overlooked or distorted if approached anachronistically by projecting present-day views onto the past. Past authors sometimes thought in ways genuinely different from those in which we have come to think of a problem, and this difference may alert us to alternative and fruitful ways of approaching the problem. As the second example tries to show, one encounters, for instance, coherent but competing metaphysical models which turn each other upside-down. In all likelihood, neither model will be free of problems or will leave no questions unanswered. Why one fundamental alternative may have more intuitive appeal for some of us than for others may well ultimately depend

[39]This is not an endorsement of a Russell-like narrative 'without regard to dates or influences' in its investigation of 'the great philosophers of the past' (Russell, *Critical Exposition*, Preface to the First Edition, xii). There is no isolated emergence and existence of 'great minds' transforming on their own the philosophical landscape. Paradigm-shifting is possible only against the backdrop of received and/or competing paradigms. As I tried to show with my third example, discovering why and how the shifting took place requires the interrogation of complex synchronic and diachronic conversations steeped in social, political, cultural, and religious contexts and commitments. On the other hand, I do not see why this recognition should lead to denying the existence of extraordinary minds capable of reshaping the intellectual inheritance in striking ways.

on our pre-theoretical, or not strictly philosophical commitments – that is, on what seems initially right or non-negotiable to us, and which we then set about to investigate or to test as rationally, rigorously, and prejudice-free as we can. This is why (as I try to show with my third example) it is often essential to take into account such broader intellectual commitments in order to fully appreciate the philosophical reasoning of other people, including historical authors.

The upshot is that the study of the history of philosophy has an innovative and subversive potential. It trains the mind to think alternatively about problems of enduring philosophical relevance, and to remain alert to the danger of intellectual dogmatism of the latest orthodoxy. This is not to say that the challenge to a current orthodoxy should always result in its rejection. There is nothing wrong in principle with ending up even more convinced by the current orthodoxy or never being shaken from one's endorsement of a current view. The point is rather that the history of philosophy helps to avoid taking current orthodoxy for granted. It seems to me that resisting the uncritical endorsement of whatever view (including prevailing views) is one of the key aims of philosophical thinking. In so far as the history of philosophy contributes in a distinctive way to the forging of critical independence, it contributes to the aims of philosophy as such. Once again, this is not to claim that critical independence can be achieved only through the history of philosophy or is best achieved through the history of philosophy. My claim is, more modestly, that the history of philosophy contributes in a distinctive and significant way to achieving these goals. Indeed, it often deals with the history of paradigm-shifting thinking by extraordinary minds who thought outside the box. There is a great deal to be gained by continuing to engage in this long, broad, and deep conversation – to benefit from its insights, to avoid the pitfalls which have already been exposed, and to take forward the journey of philosophy to the next stage of novel perspectives.

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